

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-10 and 33 remain in the application. Claim 1 has been amended and claims 11-32 have been canceled in view of Applicants' election of claims 1-10 and 33 in response to the restriction requirement.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §102

Claims 1-10 and 33 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by De Luca (US 6,410,119).

De Luca is directed "to a bubble wrap product in which [] individual inflatable strip[s] [are] defined between two laterally extending spaced apart peripheral seal lines which have an undulating configuration free of corner shapes which could concentrate stresses." (Col. 1, lines 23-27.)

De Luca further describes a pattern of seal lines that "form an inflation channel 31 which extends linearly along the length of web 11. In the particular embodiment of the packaging product 11 shown in FIG. 1, the inflation channel 31 extends along one side edge portion of the web 11. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, the inflation channel 31 extends linearly along a center portion of the web 11." (Col. 5, lines 44-51.)

At col. 5, lines 52-53, De Luca specifies that the "inflation channel 31 is defined between spaced apart seal lines 33 and 35."

The spaced apart seal lines 33 and 35 are further defined as follows:

The seal line 33 is opened at spaced intervals to provide outlet ports 37. The outlet ports 37 function to permit a certain amount of the inflation pressure in the inflation channel 31 to be vented to atmosphere. (Col. 5, lines 54-57.)

The seal line 35 is open at intervals to provide entrance ports 41. The entrance ports 41 permit pressurized air from the

inflation channel 31 to enter the individual inflatable strips 21 for inflating the bubble chambers 23 and interconnecting passageways 25 (as described above). (Col. 6, lines 5-9.)

With continuing reference to FIG. 1, De Luca further describes how the web is inflated:

An outlet bulb 57 of an inflation tube 59 is positioned within the inflation channel 31 and introduces air under pressure into the inflation channel for inflating the individual inflatable strips 21 by causing pressurized air to flow through the entrance ports 41. (Col. 6, lines 46-50.)

The outlet ports 37 which are opposite certain ones of the entrance ports 41 serve to regulate the level of the air pressure within the inflation channel 31 (as described in more detail in co-pending application Ser. No. 09/638,843 incorporated by reference in this application). (Col. 6, lines 51-55.)

[A] seal line 27 is formed across the entrance ports 41 as the strip of the film which contains the entrance ports 41 is passed through a sealing station. (Col. 6, lines 56-58.)

A slitting station (not shown in FIG. 1 but described in application Ser. No. 09/638,843 pending) slits the inflation channel 31 to permit the web 11 to pass over the inflation tube 59 after the seal line 27 has been formed by the machine 19. (Col. 6, lines 63-67.)

Accordingly, De Luca teaches an inflation channel that is bounded by first and second film sheets and defined between spaced-apart seal lines 33 and 35. As shown in FIG. 1, seal line 33 extends along one of the outermost longitudinal edges of the web while seal line 35 extends parallel to and inboard of seal line 33. Thus, the two seal lines 33 and 35 join the first and second film sheets of web 11 together such that inflation channel 31 is bounded by the first and second film sheets with

a width (when uninflated) or diameter (when inflated) that is defined by the spacing between the pair of seal lines 33 and 35.

In contrast, the claimed inflatable web employs a pair of longitudinal flanges that are open, i.e., not sealed together, at one (or both) of the outermost longitudinal edges of the web. Therefore, the flanges do not form a channel bounded on all sides as taught in De Luca, wherein the outer edge of the channel is sealed closed by seal line 33. In order to clarify this feature of the invention, claim 1 has been amended to specify that the “flanges hav[e] a pair of open, unsealed edges.” Support for the amendment is found in the specification generally, but more specifically, e.g., at the paragraphing bridging pages 5-6, FIG. 1, paragraph bridging pages 16-17, etc.

According to De Luca, an inflation tube 59 is positioned within the inflation channel 31, and introduces air under pressure into the inflation channel (col. 6, lines 46-48). Because the inflation channel is bounded by first and second film sheets and defined between the inner and outer spaced-apart seal lines, such introduction of pressurized air causes the inflation channel to inflate with pressurized air (the function of outlet ports 37 in outer seal line 33 is to allow such inflation pressure to be vented to atmosphere; col. 5, lines 54-58). The individual inflatable strips 21 are then inflated as the pressurized air in the inflation channel flows through the entrance ports 41 (col. 6, lines 46-50).

The primary disadvantage of De Luca’s web, however, is that the inflation channel must be continuously slit in order to permit the web to pass over the inflation tube 59 (col. 6, lines 63-67). This is due to the fact that De Luca’s inflation channel is sealed closed at outer seal line 33.

In contrast, Applicants’ inflatable web employs longitudinal flanges having a pair of edges that are open, i.e., not sealed together. Thus, no

slitting is required. Instead, as shown, e.g., in FIGS. 4-6 of Applicants' specification, the open, unsealed edges of the flanges move past the inflation nozzle without the need to slit the web.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the claims as now presented are patentably distinct from De Luca. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,


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